



## **Media Information**

### **Speech by a young adult, 24 March 2007**

Good morning everyone,

Some time ago, at the Seattle Olympics, 9 athletes, all mentally or physically challenged, were standing on the start line for the 100m race. The gun fired and the race began.

They ran in threes, a boy tripped and fell and started crying. The other 8 heard him crying. They slowed down and looked behind them. They stopped and came back ... All of them.

A girl with Downs Syndrome sat down next to him, hugged him and asked. "Feeling better now?" Then, all nine walked shoulder to shoulder to the finish line.

The whole crowd stood up and applauded. And the applause lasted a very long time ...

People who witnessed this still talk about it. Why? Because deep down inside us, we all know that the most important thing in life is much more than winning for ourselves. The most important thing is to help others to win. Even if that means slowing down and changing our own race.

Just a bit about my background ... I am a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation migrant from Sri Lanka. I am currently a 5<sup>th</sup> year medical student at the University of Adelaide. For me, love as a human value means compassionate, friendship and sacrifice. So the question is, what do I do to put love in action everyday? For me, practising love at university means loving the work that I do and sending love to those around me. This includes trying to speak softly and trying as much as possible not to raise my voice. This really has been challenging for me at times as I am a classic example of being 'loud' and short tempered. I keep track of my progress by doing a personal reflection each night. So what keeps me going with love in action? I am constantly bombarded by the words "Ask yourself, are your words necessary? Is it true? Is it kind? Will it hurt anyone?" So what have I got out of all this? I am definitely a much happier person!

Let me share with you a small story written by a student in America:

One day, when I was a student in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. He must really be a nerd." A bunch of kids ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. I jogged over and helped him pick up his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same of him. Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. I knew that

we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. Kyle was valedictorian of our class. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. He looked great. He began, "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach...but mostly your friends...I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his Mum and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize its depth. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life ... for better or for worse!

Just to end off, I want you all to try and answer the following questions:

- 1) Name the 3 richest people in the world
- 2) Name the last 3 Miss Universe winners
- 3) Name the last 3 Nobel Prize winners

Can't do it? Rather difficult isn't it? Don't worry, nobody remembers that.

Applause dies away!  
Trophies gather dust!  
Winners are soon forgotten.

Now answer these questions:

- 1) Name 3 friends who helped you in your hour of need
- 2) Think of 3 people who made you feel special
- 3) Name 5 people that you like to spend time with

More manageable? It's easier isn't it? The people who mean something to your life are not rated the "best", don't have the most money, haven't won the greatest prizes ...

They are the ones who care about you, take care of you, those who, no matter what, stay close by.